



Contacts

Teresa Guillen (602) 789-7377
Arizona Game and Fish Department



Brian McGrew (602) 542-0955
Arizona Department of Agriculture



Lori Faeth (602) 542-1342
Arizona Governor's Office

Arizona Game and Fish Department

NEWS RELEASE

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Governor approves new plan to manage invasive plants and animals

PHOENIX — Most people know that hitchhiking is dangerous. What they may not know is that many of Arizona's hitchhikers are nonnative invasive plants and animals that have been unintentionally brought by people over time through their travels or trades. Certainly not all nonnative species fit this description of "invader", but those that do can pose risks and expenses to Arizona.

To better deal with this issue, Gov. Janet Napolitano has approved a new statewide invasive species management plan that addresses ways to prevent or manage the proliferation of invasive pests.

The plan was developed by the Arizona Invasive Species Advisory Council (AISAC), a multi-partner organization created by an Executive Order issued by the Governor in 2007.

The Council is comprised of a variety of stakeholder and agency representatives, and is supported and led by the Arizona Game and Fish Department and the Arizona Department of Agriculture. Both agencies have a vested interest in the effect of pest invasions on Arizona's resources and economy. For example, the Department of Agriculture has had to deal with the agricultural damage that can result from pest invasions.

"We have spent thousands of dollars in production costs and pesticide applications trying to eradicate plant pests on our crops," said Donald Butler, AISAC co-chair and director of the Arizona Department of Agriculture. "But the importation and distribution of plants is a fact of life in our global economy. AISAC will take a proactive approach by communicating best practices on invasive species prevention."

Arizona Game and Fish Department officials have also seen first-hand how invasive species can negatively impact aquatic and terrestrial habitats, interrupt ecosystem processes, and cause disease in animals and humans. One example is the recent discovery of the quagga mussel, a nonnative invasive species in Arizona. A small,

freshwater mollusk, quaggas can attach themselves to any hard surface in a lake. They can take up residence on a boat and clog engine cooling systems, or they can clog water pipes that carry water for drinking, irrigation or the production of electricity. They may also cause damage to aquatic environments, affecting fish populations and habitat.

Less than two years ago, this aquatic nuisance was first discovered in Lake Mead.

"It has now been found in lakes Havasu, Mohave and Pleasant," said Larry Voyles, AISAC co-chair and director of the Arizona Game and Fish Department. "This species was known to be a nuisance at the Great Lakes in Michigan, but has now been introduced to the western states by people who really didn't know better, and likely purely by accident."

"Arizona will take the steps outlined in the management plan developed by the Council to address invasive species education, control and restoration needs," said Governor Napolitano. "We have our work cut out for us, but based on their management plan, I know we can be effective and productive." The Council will continue to meet quarterly, and Council work groups will be helping Arizona implement the management plan's objectives and recommending strategies to help us track progress.

For more information about invasive species, or to obtain a copy of Arizona's management plan, visit www.governor.state.az.us/AIS/.

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